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7-11 April 2008
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up actions to the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development

Statement submitted by World Youth Alliance, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.9/2008/1.

08-22055 (E) 130208

Statement

We, young people of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds, affirm that each person has inherent dignity. Recognition of this dignity is the basis for authentic development. Each person lives in community and therefore has the responsibility to contribute to society through the gift of self. We believe that the members of society contribute to or hinder development through their choices.

Authentic development is a process that takes place at all levels of society, creating a social, political, and economic environment that allows persons to reach their full physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional potential.

Basic necessities such as access to clean water, sanitation, and adequate healthcare promote a healthy population, which is essential to development. Responsible stewardship of natural resources allows a population to develop without compromising its well-being.

We believe that education is a foundational element of development. The goal of education must be to help people recognize their dignity and equip them with the necessary tools to exercise their potential. When every member of a population is aware of how their education contributes to development, they will be able to fulfill their responsibility in society.

The creativity of the human person is earth's greatest resource and a catalyst for development. Human creativity generates new ideas and alternatives for development. We assert that, although the human person's creative capacity is unlimited, it should never be implemented in ways that compromise the inherent dignity of every human person.

Each society has its own demographic structure with specific implications for development within that society. It is necessary for individuals, society, governments, and institutions to work in solidarity to foster the adequate conditions such as freedom, peace, and security that lead to development. It is not the density or composition of a population that determines the degree of development. A population which utilizes its creativity can overcome obstacles to development, including a lack of natural resources.

We invite persons at all levels of society to use their creativity, skills, and resources to provide opportunities and the necessary environment for authentic development.

Themes of the forty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development

We commend the international community for its continued efforts to improve the quality of life of persons around the world through the alleviation of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development. The solidarity of the international community in this effort is essential to its success. Relating to the particular theme of this year's session, Population Distribution, Urbanization and Internal Migration, the World Youth Alliance would like to place a particular emphasis on capacity-building. Development is driven by people; people committed to the betterment of themselves, their family, community and country. Therefore, investments in human capital through education, health

care and security and in social capital through support of good governance and subsidiarity are crucial for successful development.

Urban Population

As stated in the documents for the forty-first session of the Commission on Population and Development, increasing urbanization, particularly in less developed countries, poses unique challenges to municipalities, national governments and international development organizations. Creativity is required to develop policies that overcome these challenges and address the poverty and lack of opportunity that drive people from rural areas. In particular, the input and direction of migrants themselves is required since they best know their needs and the culturally appropriate responses. Governments and international programs directed at poverty alleviation in the urban and rural settings and the provision of basic services to new urban communities could benefit greatly from such partnerships with civil society. These partnerships are an important part of capacity-building and thus civic engagement and sustainable development.

Population Distribution and the Environment

The natural environment is greatly affected by urbanization and current world trends in internal migration. The large concentrations of air pollutants as well as solid wastes and wastewater produced in large cities have the potential to overwhelm the local natural environment. Management of these pollutants and protection of the natural environment is essential to protecting human dignity and to creating conditions for authentic development.

The World Youth Alliance encourages the international community to foster responsible stewardship of the natural environment as it manages changing population distributions. Each member of society must recognize his or her personal responsibility to be an effective steward of the natural environment that all of us share. Responsible stewardship is the personal commitment to care for both earth and neighbor. This commitment will build the capacity of communities to effectively manage and develop resources.

We place great value on our natural environment as a source of both physical sustenance and immeasurable beauty to be cared for with wisdom and temperance. Responsible stewardship recognizes the moral necessity of forming sound policy in order to preserve and enhance the riches of the natural world for future generations.

Development and Population

Changing age structures within the context of development are an important consideration in examining impacts of urbanization. The United Nations Population Division points out that aging is more rapid in urban areas due to lower fertility. At the same time, old-age dependency ratios have been reduced through the migration of relatively young people to urban centers. Over the long term however, these ratios will increase, given the international community's consistent efforts to reduce fertility, particularly in less developed countries where urbanization is occurring more rapidly.

In developing countries currently experiencing accelerated population aging and rapid urbanization, dependency ratios will increase significantly in a short time. Social wealth may not be sufficient to adequately support people who retire. Women in particular will be disproportionately affected by lack of social resources to manage increased old-age dependency ratios, given their greater number among persons over sixty years.

We encourage the Commission and the international community to reconsider their approach to the issue of population in light of emerging data, by focusing on capacity-building.

Capacity-Building

The World Youth Alliance is convinced that through creativity, innovation and hard work, people can overcome the current development challenges posed by rapid urbanization. Poverty, environmental degradation and increasing dependency ratios are not inevitable. Development programs that build human capacity will allow people to reach their individual potentials and to contribute their abilities to their communities and societies.

The World Youth Alliance encourages the international community to continually strive to ensure that aid is well directed; we propose that the best investment is in human capacity-building to bring about a just and sustainable society.

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Follow-up actions to the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development

Statement submitted by Population Action International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Sexual and Reproductive Health in an Urban World

Today, more than half of the world's population – 3.3 billion people – live in urban areas, and one billion of these live in slums. By 2015, 3.9 billion people will live in cities. Then, as now, most of these people will live in developing countries.[1] Cities have great opportunities to provide for residents through economies of scale. Jobs, schools and health care facilities and practitioners are often concentrated in urban areas. However, the rate of urban growth often outstrips the ability of city governments to provide for all residents, especially in smaller cities (those under 500,000, where most urban dwellers reside) that lack urban planning capacity. In 1994, the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) called for universal access to a package of basic reproductive health services, including family planning, and for specific measures to foster human development (with particular emphasis on women) by 2015. The Programme of Action addressed the prospect of an increasingly urban world (at that time 2.5 billion people lived in urban areas), by urging governments to increase the capacity of decision makers at the city level to "respond to the needs of all citizens, including urban squatters, for personal safety, basic infrastructure and services, to eliminate health and social problems… and to provide people with alternatives to living in areas prone to natural and man made disasters."[2] While cities have great potential to address many development issues, from education to poverty reduction to health, urban life also imposes unique threats. A far greater commitment to ICPD principles is needed to fulfill the promise of urban life.

While many migrants move to cities from rural areas each year, most urban growth results from natural increase, or births among those already residing in cities. This occurs even though fertility and desired family size are nearly always lower in urban than rural areas.[3] Furthermore, fertility rates are higher among poor urban women than wealthier women. It is therefore critical to ensure access to quality sexual and reproductive health care including family planning for *all* urban women and men, to help women meet their desire to space out and limit pregnancies, and to slow urban growth to manageable levels.

Reducing economic inequality is also a critical need in cities. The benefits of urban life are not equally distributed across income groups. While health indicators are often better for urban than rural populations, and indicators like infant mortality are often lower for the urban poor than the rural poor, the urban poor generally fare worse than their wealthier urban counterparts. In some cases the urban poor fare worse even than those in rural areas.[4] A recent study using demographic and health survey (DHS) data to examine health disparities in Nairobi found that while the overall child mortality rate in

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1 United Nations Human Settlements Programme. 2003. *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003.* Nairobi, Kenya.

2 United Nations. 1995. *Population and Development, vol 1: Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development: Cairo: 5-13 September 1994,* paragraph 9.14. New York: Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, United Nations.

3 United Nations Human Settlements Programme. 2003. *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003.* Nairobi, Kenya.

4 Don Hinrichsen, Ruwaida Salem, and Richard Blackburn. 2002. "The Urban Poor." *Population Reports.* Volume XXX, Series M, Number 16.

Nairobi was half the rural rate, the child mortality rate in Nairobi's slums far exceeded the rural rate, as well as the rate for the country as a whole.[5] Similar disparities have also been observed in critical indicators of women's health such as maternal mortality, the unmet need for contraception, and attended births; far more research is needed for a clearer understanding of urban disparities in reproductive health.[6]

Young people under 25 make up half of the world's urban population. As for other groups, cities offer greater educational opportunities – school attendance is 26% higher among urban boys and 38% higher among urban girls than their rural counterparts. Yet while there are many economic opportunities in the city, unemployment is higher among young adults than in older groups, and it can be difficult for young people to find employment in the formal sector. Pervasive gender-based discrimination makes employment even more difficult for young women, for whom poverty increases the risk of sexual exploitation and violence, endangering them and their sexual and reproductive health, and increasing their risk of unintended pregnancy, STIs and HIV.[7]

The global population shift from rural to urban is not likely to be reversed, and cities offer great promise in meeting the challenges of global human development in many areas, including health and education. Ensuring that these opportunities are available to all the world's urban dwellers requires gender-sensitive city planning, and development strategies different from those used to reach the rural poor, which are the focus of poverty reduction strategies in many countries. In addition to upholding the rights of all citizens, it is important that policymakers maintain focus on issues affecting women's well being, including legal rights, education, safety from violence, access to credit, safe and legal housing, safe water and sanitation services, and critically, to sexual and reproductive health. This requires the ongoing commitment of financial resources for the ICPD goals, and investment in quality, accessible health care and health education for all urban residents, particularly the poor, new urban migrants, and women, without neglecting health services in rural areas.

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5 Mark Montgomery and Paul Hewett. 2005. "Urban Poverty and Health in Developing Countries: Household and Neighborhood Effects." *Demography*. Vol. 42(3):397-425.

6 Montgomery, Mark. 2004. The Place of the Urban Poor in the Cairo Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals. New York: Paper Presented at the Seminar on the Relevance of Population Aspects for the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, New York, 17-19 November 2004. http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/PopAspectsMDG/23_Montgomery.pdf, last accessed January 22, 2008.

7 UNFPA. 2007. *Growing up Urban: State of World Population 2007 Youth Supplement*. New York NY.